

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

APRIL 21, 1858.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. HALE made the following

REPORT.

[To accompany Bill S. 277.]

The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of Albert G. Allen, late navy agent at Washington, make the following report:

The case of the memorialist is similar to that of J. H. Lathrop, Mr. Allen's predecessor in office, for whose relief an act was passed at the last session, which, in effect, gave him two and a half per cent. upon disbursements to persons entitled thereto under the appropriation acts of 31st August, 1852, and 3d March, 1853, giving extra pay to officers, petty officers, seamen, and marines, who served in the Pacific ocean, upon the coasts of Mexico and California, during the periods therein specified.

The act for the relief of Mr. Lathrop originated in the Senate, and the report in the case from the naval committee accompanies this, and is marked A. From that report the following is quoted:

“The amount charged by him, [the navy agent,] two and a half per cent. commissions on his disbursements of extra pay claims, your committee consider not more than a reasonable compensation for the very hazardous and laborious nature of the duties performed. In some instances Congress has granted a much larger commission for services less meritorious and hazardous. * * * Even should the relief prayed for be granted by Congress, your committee are of opinion that the evidence before them shows that in no other way could the claims have been examined and paid so economically for the government, or so satisfactorily for the claimants, as in the one which was adopted.”

From a careful examination of the facts in the cases of Mr. Allen and Mr. Lathrop, your committee are unable to see any distinction other than that the duties were devolved upon the latter *while* navy agent, and that when the former (Mr. Allen) accepted the office the duty had been pretermitted, by direction of the President, upon the ground that Congress could not have been aware of the immense labor and outlay involved by the execution of the acts before named. It is

true, also, that over and above the number of clerks allowed to Mr. Lathrop, some two additional, upon the average, were allowed during the period of Mr. Allen's term, (eighteen months, with disbursements of some two millions of dollars, nearly one-half of which was under the head of extra pay;) but these were made necessary by a vast accumulation of claims and increased labor in their intelligent, careful and just adjudication under constantly augmenting rules and directions emanating from the office of the Second Comptroller of the Treasury. (Copies of these are marked B.) It has been made known to the committee, upon the authority of the *then* Second Comptroller, that an excellent system was adopted by Mr. Allen for the adjudication of the claims, and that, by some of his suggestions, the government has been greatly served in methods of detecting frauds upon the treasury, which have probably saved large sums; as it is known that copies of the rolls had, by some means, got into the hands of agents in New York and other great cities.

In view of the labor and responsibility arising from the adjudication of these claims, the Second Comptroller and Fourth Auditor of the Treasury united in a representation to the Secretary of the Treasury, (Mr. Guthrie,) that Messrs. Lathrop and Allen were entitled to equitable compensation in addition to their small salaries. It accompanies this, (marked C,) and from it the following is copied:

"The most onerous and perplexing duty connected with the disbursement was placed upon the navy agent. The large sum to be distributed among thousands of claimants in nearly all parts of the world had its natural effect in stimulating the cupidity of unscrupulous men, and evoking bold and ingenious attempts at fraud. A few only of these have been successful, but that more have not succeeded has been owing to the vigilance of the former and present navy agents, who have acquitted themselves of a difficult and irksome labor, in a manner highly creditable to them as disbursing officers, and fully justifying the trust reposed in their fidelity and judgment. The spurious claims were numerous; frequently vouchers in an apparently ample manner, and requiring minute and cautious comparisons to discriminate between the false and the true. In view of the nature and importance of the new and extraordinary duty thus imposed upon them, the navy agents ask to be paid an adequate compensation for the labor, responsibility, and risk of loss attending it. We think their request is reasonable and just."

Upon this point your committee have to state that an allowance, as above suggested, was not made by the Secretary of the Treasury, upon the ground that there was no law authorizing him to grant it, and that relief must be asked of Congress.

Mr. Allen also states that his anxiety to make prompt payment of the most urgent claims induced him not only to give personal attention to them out of office hours, but that he incurred obligations out of his private means for extra labor, in arranging papers before in great confusion, and in examining and collecting proofs, &c.

It is proper to add that Mr. Allen acted as navy pension agent, for which duty he has received no compensation whatever, though the office is a distinct one from that of navy agent, and involving addi-

tional risks and duties, for the faithful performance of which he gave bond in the penalty of \$50,000. His bond as navy agent was (he thinks) \$60,000. All he has ever received as compensation is a salary of \$2,000 a year, (a sum less than that allowed some clerks in departments.)

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